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## Chapter 1 : Cynthia Voigt Interview Transcript | Scholastic

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Plot[ edit ] The Narrator, who is not named but simply called "Brother", recounts the life of his younger brother, William Armstrong, nicknamed "Doodle". Doodle is born a sickly child, who is not expected to live because of his birth defects. His family even has a small coffin made in the case of his death. Doodle survives, but for most of his childhood, he is unable to move or respond to his environment. Luckily, Doodle smiles at Brother before he can do the deed, and, overjoyed that his brother is smart, Brother leaves him be. Doodle eventually learns to crawl, even though the doctor says the strain of even sitting up might kill him because of his weak heart. He crawls backwards, though, reminding the narrator of a doodlebug, leading him to nickname William, "Doodle". But Doodle is still very weak and feeble. Brother wanted someone who could run and jump and play with him, but resents having the weak and fragile Doodle instead. It is now that Brother decides to train Doodle to be a "normal human being". He takes Doodle down to the swamp to teach him how to walk. Eventually, shortly before his sixth birthday, Doodle learns to walk with help from Brother. Encouraged by this, Brother decides to teach Doodle how to run, climb vines, swim, row and even fight to prepare Doodle for school. However, almost a year after the plan was made, Doodle is far from accomplishing the goals by the nearing deadline. One day, a big red bird appears in their garden, looking sick and tired. When the bird dies, Doodle, pitying the creature, buries it, while the rest of the family looks on and laughs. On their way back to the house, Brother has Doodle practice rowing. A sudden rainstorm comes, and when they reach the riverbank, Doodle is tired and frightened. Brother, angry and frustrated that Doodle could not finish his training before school starts, runs ahead of Doodle, leaving the frightened boy behind. When Brother does not see Doodle, he returns for him, his anger dissipated. To his horror, he finds Doodle, lifeless, lying on the ground with blood flowing out of his mouth, staining his throat and shirt a brilliant red. Analysis[ edit ] The story has been described as "rich in symbolism". The scarlet ibis is the main symbol in the story, as is the color red and the ibis in comparison to Doodle as fragile yet majestic. He attended Booker T. In , Hurst abandoned his musical career and became a banker in New York for the next thirty-four years. He wrote plays and short stories in his spare time.

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*Critical Reading Activities Series. Includes the following literature guides for the Works of: Cynthia Voigt. Gary Paulsen. Katherine Paterson.*

The author was interviewed by Scholastic students. How did you become interested in writing books for children? I became interested in writing books for children when I started reading books for children, which, oddly enough, was not when I was a child, but when I was teaching fifth grade. I had to make a reading list for my students, so I went to the library and started reading the books beginning at A and ending up at Z! Before then, I wrote for grownups and for my kid, but I failed! Did you ever win a writing contest? I read then, but nobody was interested in our writing. Maybe I was a late bloomer. Were there any teachers or people who encouraged you to write? No one encouraged me and said I had talent. In fact, there were people who did their best to discourage me. There were teachers who found me interesting to teach, and that was encouraging! My first book that I published was *Homecoming*, but the fourth book that I published was actually written before that. That book was *Calendar Papers*. What book did you have the most fun writing? They were just smooth. So in that respect they were the most fun. What was the hardest book for you to write? First, the books are getting harder to write as I go along. Did you ever have problems finishing a book? I do have trouble starting books. I have ideas that I have trouble starting to write. How did you get the idea for the books in the Tillerman cycle? Did you know a family like the Tillermans? So the idea for the Tillerman series came from the Tillermans themselves. Where did you get your idea for *Homecoming*? I saw a bunch of kids waiting in a car at a parking lot by the market where I was going to do my shopping. For some reason, I wondered as I walked into the store, what would happen if nobody came back to get them? And that was how I got that idea. I wrote that one down immediately, because I knew it was a really good one. Did you like the movie they made of *Homecoming*? Except that they left out so many words, yes I did. I thought they did a good job and were true to the book. I was very grateful that the people who had made it, made it. *Homecoming* was simply too long to have all that in one book. It became a favorite in our family. She is now in her first year of college and we still refer to Dicey and her family. Thank you for bringing such a wonderful story into our lives. I feel that this book taught my daughter how to escape into a story. None of them are in my biography. We have them in different forms or under different names. How did it feel to win the Newbery Medal? It felt absolutely terrific. I said to myself, "Okay, you can get anxious about this at the end of January. I think if my parents had given me the horse that I asked for when I was twelve, I might have felt the same way. It was like being queen for a day. What do you think you do especially well as an author? Aristotle said that character is the easiest thing to do and that plot is the hardest. I agree with him! What writing skill do you think is the most important for students to learn? I can hardly even separate the different writing skills, let alone choose which is best. When I was a teacher I wanted my students to be comfortable using language to express their own ideas, and to be adept at that as much as they could be. Do you think that going to writing classes can make a person a better writer? I think ability is one part of the deal. What you do with it is another part, and maybe even more important. What school can do is open your eyes, open your mind, give you things that you might want to write about. But life does that too. So do I think you need a Ph. As a matter of fact, I might even vote the other way! Did you ever take any writing classes? When I was teaching, at the end of the school day, we used to read aloud for half an hour. The kids loved this time. Also, make sure that there are lots of books around for them to read and teach them phonics so they can learn how to read! Do you plan your stories in an outline, or just make them up as you go along? I definitely plan them in an outline. They come out more clearly in the outline than they do in the pages. Then I can see where the mistakes are. Has your writing style and process changed over the years. Well, one problem with the style question is that different books require a different style to be well written. The process has changed to the extent that I make outlines differently, and not as well. I used to plan more carefully and more precisely. How long does it usually take you to write and publish a

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book? I would think two to three years. I figure about a year to write it, a year to revise it with an editor, and then about another year to get it out. I used to have to know the title before I could write the story, or at least I wanted to know the title. But then, because of the way the story changes as I write it, I found I sometimes had to change the title. I got three titles out of that one book! For the book *When She Hollers*, I could not think of a good title. I tried various different ones, and they were all dead. Regina Griffiths, my editor, thought of it, and it was really very good. Where do you get your ideas for your books? I get them from my own experiences, mostly. For example, I was in the Alps wandering alongside a very steep, rocky river, and the steepness of the ravine made me think of the plot for *The Wings of the Falcon*. Sometimes other books give me ideas. Or sometimes I see a landscape and I want to write about it. Once, I dreamt about one of my books before I wrote it. In general, something attracts my attention and makes me wonder, "What if? Do your children ever give you ideas for your books? They were much more interested in themselves than in me, which is how it should be. My daughter has read all my books; my son has read one or two of them; and they both give me the impression that they approve of them. Did you like to read when you were a child? I read everything I could get my hands on. *Frisby and the Rats of Nimh*. Why did you like *Cherry Ames* and *Nancy Drew* books? Because they were good stories, with people I wanted to be! *Cherry Ames* was an army nurse, and she got out in the world and did things. Even though I fell off every horse I got on, I had an image as myself as a horseback rider, and I wanted to be a vet. The characters in the books I liked all got out there and did things that I wanted to do for myself. What types of books do you like to read now?

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